

# THINKING LIKE AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPER

July 11, 2017

Downtown Intersections – Virginia Main Street, DHCD

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# Agenda

- ⦿ Economic Development 101
- ⦿ Working with Your Economic Development Department
- ⦿ Opportunities
- ⦿ Group Exercise
- ⦿ Open Discussion
- ⦿ Ask a Practitioner

# Economic Development 101

## ◎ Purpose

- Recruit and retain businesses
- Increase quality employment opportunities
- Increase tax revenues from non-residential sources

## ◎ Core Functional Areas

- Investment Attraction
- Job Creation
- Business Retention

*Other Functions can include:*

- *Entrepreneurship*
- *Agribusiness*
- *Exporting*

## ◎ Tourism

- Visitors = tax revenue without cost of municipal services.
- Opportunity to increase vitality and support cultural assets.

# Economic Development 101

CONTIUED

## Characteristics

- Political
- High profile
- Industry focused
- Goals set by strategic plan
- Not autonomous
- Emphasis on confidentiality

### Confidentiality is King

*Confidentiality is a cornerstone of economic development practice and essential to success. This includes:*

- *Names of prospect companies*
- *Company finances, business plan, requirements, etc.*
- *Real estate prices and potential development.*

*Keeping these items confidential is crucial. Make sure your board knows and is comfortable with this.*

# Economic Development 101

CONTIUED

## Restrictions to Keep in Mind

- ⦿ Public \$, not private donations (in Virginia).
- ⦿ Cannot generally benefit or promote one business or private property owner over another.
- ⦿ Transparency requirements
  - Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
  - Open meeting and notice requirements
- ⦿ Legislation and regulations required to offer incentives (in Virginia).
- ⦿ The government process is inherently slow

# Working with Your Economic Development Department

## ⦿ Alignment with Strategic Plan

- Make it easy
- Put it in writing
- Involve them in the process

ONLY if there will be follow through

## ⦿ Working relationship

- Share knowledge
- Ask for advice and data
- Share the credit
- Share data

# Opportunities

⦿ **Reciprocal knowledge** of conditions, initiatives & recruitment.

⦿ **Collaborate**

- Marketing
- Incentive programs
- Entrepreneurial programs
- Recruitment
- Strategic planning
- Market and industry research
- Other types of technical assistance

*Are you leveraging  
resources toward  
common goals?*

# Opportunities

## ◎ Your inside connection

- Planning, Zoning, and Finance Departments
- Commissioner of the Revenue
- Town/City/County Administrator/Manager
- Local Governing Body

***Don't forget to be their inside connection!** Keep them informed on what is happening on Main Street.*

## ◎ Understand the local, regional, and state political landscape.

## ◎ Potential advocate on broader business issues.



# Group Exercise

*Consider your local economic development department.*

1. Rate your relationship on a scale of 1-10.
2. Describe a time a request from you/your organization to them was denied.
3. What is most important to that department right now?

# Discussion and Q&A

- ④ Open Discussion
- ④ Ask a Practitioner

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